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**Committees:**  
Judiciary (*Chair*)  
Higher Education  
Capital Budget



# 2003

## A REPORT TO THE 26<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

Dear Neighbor,

It's been a difficult legislative session, but I'm pleased to say that we accomplished a lot in Olympia this year.

Some of our achievements for the 2003 session include:

- Approving a transportation plan to boost our economy and help get us out of gridlock.
- Funding local projects that will generate new jobs and enhance our communities.
- Passing measures to increase public safety.
- Protecting critical health care programs for children and pregnant mothers.

Unfortunately, our tough economic times left the Legislature with few attractive options in crafting a two-year budget. We fought hard in the House for a budget that maintained our commitments to schools, human services, and health care, and we succeeded in some respects- preserving spaces in the Basic Health Plan and retaining health care coverage for low-income children, child abuse prevention programs and prenatal care services for pregnant mothers.

Inside I'll describe more of what happened this session. As always, I welcome your comments about the budget or any of the other important issues facing our state. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

**LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1 - 800 - 562 - 6000**  
**HEARING IMPAIRED: 1 - 800 - 635 - 9993**

### **WHAT'S INSIDE:**

- Budget report
- Transportation plan and West Sound projects
- Projects to boost local economy
- Addressing medical malpractice costs
- Judiciary Committee update

# PATRICIA LANTZ • SERVING THE 26TH DISTRICT

## A BUDGET THAT LIVES WITHIN ITS MEANS

Our state's struggling economy left us with a \$2.7 billion budget deficit this session. And though it resulted in painful cuts, we passed a lean budget without raising taxes. Unfortunately, I would have preferred to make stronger investments in our K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. While we did increase per pupil spending to \$5,469 for the next two years, there is much more that we need to do to support our schools and our teachers.

In order to do this, we must continue to move forward with education reform, establishing higher standards for our schools and improving pay for our valuable teachers. Additionally, I

have not given up on the fight for simple-majority approval for school levies. This session we passed a measure that would let the public decide on this issue. Our counterparts in the Senate blocked this important legislation to help our schools receive the funding they deserve.

In the area of higher education, we slowed Senate efforts to raise tuition at colleges and universities, but there will still be increases. At the same time, we made some outstanding new investments in higher education facilities. At Olympic College, we invested in a new science building that is adequately wired for the current technology needs of the college.



The old building, a converted grade school which opened in 1954, lacked proper ventilation causing some science experiments to set off fire alarms. At Tacoma Community College, we funded a new Information Technology Vocational Center in addition to renovating and replacing some of the school's older facilities.

## A TRANSPORTATION PLAN TO GET OUR ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN

We led off this session by enacting a package of accountability reforms to ensure transportation projects are carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. It was only after enacting these reforms that we passed a focused plan that emphasizes the right priorities first – safety and preserving the system we already have – then tackles the traffic gridlock that is hurting our economy, harming our environment, and damaging our quality of life. And in



choosing projects we were careful to include only those that are ready to go right away.

While the plan does not address all of the needs in our community, it does take on some vital projects in the West Sound that will better deliver commuters to work and goods to their markets. And one of the best aspects of this package is that it is funded in part by a user fee, the gas tax, which *all* the motorists in our state must pay. Unlike Narrows Bridge users, the funds to improve Highway 16 and other local projects will be generated by every driver in our state.

Some of the West Sound projects include:

► Maintaining passenger-only ferry service between Bremerton and Seattle through September.

- Funding for a new auto ferry, vessel and terminal preservation, and terminal improvements.
- \$247 million in improvements to State Route 16.
- \$15 million for construction of an improved interchange at the SR 16, Burley-Olalla Interchange.
- \$11 million to widen SR 304/SR 3 leading to the Bremerton Ferry Terminal.
- \$3.8 million to reduce accidents on SR 160 between SR 16 and Longlake Road.

Under current funding, we also save the Vashon Island- downtown Seattle passenger-only ferry run used by many West Sound commuters traveling from Southworth to Seattle. This is a major victory for commuters in our community.

# 2003 REPORT TO THE 26TH DISTRICT

## A BOOST TO OUR COMMUNITY

### ■ *Developing Bremerton's waterfront*

In addition to funding the construction of a new science building at Olympic College, we made a major investment in Bremerton's waterfront redevelopment project which includes a conference center, plaza, park and other civic facilities. We also provide funding for the renovation of another important civic facility, the Bremerton Naval Museum. These exciting projects take advantage of extremely low interest rates, putting many people back to work and giving Bremerton a needed shot in the arm.

### ■ *Funding for parks, local facilities*

This was also one of the best budgets for state parks and cultural facilities in years. At a time when some parks are closing down, we made investments in parks across the state which we'll be preserving for the long term. In our community, we provided funding for Kitsap County Park at Anderson Point on Colvos Passage as well as the new Gig Harbor- Peninsula Historical Society and the Western Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Port Orchard.



## ADDRESSING THE HIGH COST OF MEDICAL MALPRACTICE INSURANCE

One of the toughest issues we faced in Olympia this session was how to deal with the high cost of medical malpractice insurance. In recent years, these premiums have shot up, driving some doctors out of business around our state. Unfortunately, some of the solutions for fixing this problem would do more harm than good. In particular, many lobbyists are calling for capping the right of victims of medical malpractice insurance to seek relief when they've been harmed by medical errors.

Capping damages would not lower malpractice premiums. Numerous recent studies, including one by a leading insurance ratings firm, have shown that caps do not lower premiums. Furthermore, capping judgments places an arbitrary value on the lives of people harmed by medical errors. In April, I had lunch with a group of victims of medical malpractice. And, rather than looking like a bunch of lottery winners, these were men and women who looked beaten down by a disability or the loss of a daughter, son, husband or wife.

This year I offered a package of bipartisan reforms that would have addressed many of the causes of rising court costs and malpractice premiums. However, the insurance lobbyists were fixed on taking away the constitutional right of citizens to seek relief when they've been harmed. This interim I will continue working to build a consensus for medical malpractice reform that keeps our doctors on duty in a satisfying professional environment and keeps our citizens — and their rights — healthy and secure.

**PATRICIA  
LANTZ**



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If you want more information about this complex issue, please contact my Legislative Assistant, Carmen Butler, at 360-786-7964 or visit my website- <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/lantz/medmalinfo.asp>

# 2003 REPORT TO THE 26TH DISTRICT

## JUDICIARY COMMITTEE UPDATE

### ■ *Voyeurism law strengthened*

Last fall, the state Supreme Court ruled that our voyeurism statute did not prohibit up-skirt filming in a public place. I responded this session by introducing legislation to address the gap in the law. I'm very pleased to report that the voyeurism bill — the second bill introduced this year — was signed into law by Governor Gary Locke on May 12. Women across our state will now have an added layer of security when they're in public.

### ■ *Advance directives measure signed into law*

For years I've been working on legislation to give individuals who suffer from mental illness a stronger say in deciding their course of treatment. This year we finally delivered, passing legislation that enables persons with mental illness to develop directives outlining the kind of care they want — or do not want — when they become unstable. These advance directives serve as a kind of "living will" to help guide individuals back to a functioning level.

### ■ *Projects for next year*

A shudder went through our community with the recent murder of Crystal Brame by her husband, Tacoma Police Chief David Brame. This terrible loss highlighted the important issue of domestic violence again and the need to have a particular system in place for victims of domestic violence who have been battered by law enforcement officers. Often, these women, and sometimes men, have nowhere to turn when abused because their spouse or partner has access to court records and other information that would reveal their whereabouts. Next session I'll be working with legislators to look at the merits of establishing an independent place for spouses and partners of law enforcement officers to turn when victimized by domestic violence.

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